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RUEHRG/AMCONSUL RECIFE 8830
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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 BRASILIA 001652

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SUBJECT: UKRAINE REQUESTS USG SUPPORT FOR UKRAINIAN-BRAZILIAN SPACE LAUNCH JOINT VENTURE AT ALCANTARA

Classified By: Deputy Chief of Mission Lisa Kubiske, Reason 1.4 (b) and (d)

REF: BRASILIA 1590

¶1. (C) SUMMARY. The Ukrainian Embassy in Brasilia is urging the USG to reconsider its earlier position and now support the Ukrainian-Brazilian space launch venture that will operate out of Alcantara, allowing U.S. satellite firms to benefit from these facilities. While the Ukrainians noted some possible commercial and other benefits to the United States, they stressed that the principal reason for the USG to agree to this request is to help keep the Russians out of the space launch field in Brazil. Post would appreciate Washington's guidance on how to respond to the Ukrainians about this request. END SUMMARY.

¶2. (C) The Ukrainian Defense Attache in Brasilia, Brazil, requested a meeting with Embassy staff to discuss space cooperation. Accordingly, on December 12 Assistant Air Attache Mark Harrington and Science Counselor Richard Driscoll met with Ukrainian Ambassador Volodymyr Lakomov, Oleksandr Serdyuk, the General Director for Alcantara Cyclone Space (a Ukrainian-Brazilian joint venture), and the Rustam Akhunov, First Secretary at the Ukrainian Embassy. The Ukrainians want USG support for the Alcantara project. They noted that when Ukraine had raised the subject earlier with the USG that the response had been that we would not support (though not necessarily oppose it). Now, Ukraine would like the USG to revisit that decision.

¶3. (C) Serdyuk outlined three principal reasons why the USG should be supportive of the Ukraine-Brazil project. First, he said that Ukraine could use its influence with the Brazilian Congress to obtain approval for the long-stalled U.S.-Brazil space cooperation agreement regarding Alcantara. When asked to elaborate, he said there are many in the Brazilian Congress who are friendly towards Ukraine and he could win them over to support ratification of the agreement with the United States. Second, he noted that Ukraine was working with a U.S. firm, Orbital Science, hinting that if this project ever got off the ground that the U.S. firm Orbital Science could benefit commercially. Also, he said U.S. satellite firms may find it much less expensive

to use the Alcantara facility than other options. He estimated a cost savings of up to 30 percent. Third, the Ukrainians repeatedly emphasized that if this space cooperation activity with Brazil did not start making some headway that the Brazilians would turn to the Russians waiting in the wings. (SEE REFTEL ABOUT RUSSIAN PRESIDENT MEDVEDEV'S RECENT VISIT TO BRAZIL.)

ALCANTARA UPDATE

14. (C) The Ukrainians briefed Embassy officers on developments at Alcantara. Serdyuk highlighted the ideal location of this launch facility, which was at 2.3 degrees South and so, less expensive for launching satellites into geostationary orbits. The Ukrainians have a launcher, the Cyclone 2, which can carry a payload of up to 1,600 kilograms or 5.3 tons into orbit. Ukraine will provide the launch vehicles in this joint venture; Brazil will provide basic infrastructure, such as seaport, airport, and roads. They both would work on construction of the launch site. Following a serious accident at the Alcantara site on August 22, 2003, which put the joint venture on hold for years, both sides are now trying to move forward. Brazil has been grappling with a land title problem because a local community descended from runaway slaves (called a quilombo) has claimed the original site. Serdyuk reported that the Brazilian government has decided to construct a new launch site in a nearby locale, abandoning the initial site. The Brazilian side of activities at Alcantara is handled by CTA, which is an entity of the Brazilian Air Force.

15. (C) The Ukrainians are aiming to launch their first commercial payload from the new Brazilian site in 2011, which would be an

BRASILIA 00001652 002 OF 002

Argentine satellite, and expect another Argentine satellite in 2012, as well as some demand from Brazil Telecom.

COMMENT

16. (C) The Ukrainians want to know if the USG will reconsider its earlier decision and agree to support the Ukraine-Brazil joint venture by allowing them to launch U.S. satellites. While the Ukrainians highlighted the benefits to the United States, their principle argument was that if the USG doesn't take this step, then the Russians will fill the void and become the chief partner for Brazil on space cooperation. As noted in REFTEL, Brazil-Russia space launch cooperation has high level political support. Ukrainian protestations notwithstanding, it is unlikely that Brazil sees cooperation with Ukraine and Russia as an either/or proposition.

17. (U) Post would appreciate Washington's guidance on how to respond to the Ukrainian request for USG support or involvement in the Ukrainian-Brazilian space launch joint venture.

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